



# Emergency Management **UPDATE**

November 2002

## VDEM News in Brief



**How me the money.** Virginia is awaiting federal approval of its application for funds under the FY 2002 Homeland

Security Supplemental Appropriation to FEMA. The Commonwealth's initial allocation will be approximately \$2.5 million for state and local emergency operations planning and about \$470,000 for the Citizen Corps and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs. If FEMA moves quickly, the state should be able to provide grant application information to local governments and state agencies in the December/January time frame.

**C runch time.** In keeping with Gov. Mark Warner's budget guidance to state agencies, **VDEM will cease production of the printed version of our monthly newsletter after this issue.**



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**D rought dispatch.** Since September 1, rainfall has been above average over most of the state with the Shenandoah Valley receiving about 125 percent of normal precipitation. Many surface water reservoirs are now reporting full conditions while others have received substantial inflow.

(continued on page 4)



**Signs of change.** This photo illustration shows how VDOT message boards would be used to help publicize a statewide Amber Alert under proposed modifications to the state EAS plan. (VDEM Photo.)

## Amber Alert to speed child searches

By Bob Lambert, Staff Writer

**C**reated in 1996 after the Texas kidnap-murder of 9-year-old Amber Hagerman, the Amber Alert system has contributed to the safe return of nearly three dozen children — including two California teenagers kidnapped at gunpoint.

Virginia now has regional plans in effect for the Richmond, Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads and Roanoke areas. Recently, a local Amber Alert for a missing 9-year-old (Jennifer Short of Bassett) pointed to the need for a fully integrated statewide system.

As Congress considers a proposal to take the program nationwide, the Virginia State Police and VDEM, in cooperation with cable, radio and television media, are finalizing the Commonwealth's strategy to avoid simultaneous state/local broadcasts of these messages by integrating Amber Alert into the Virginia Emergency Alert System (EAS) plan.

Under the proposal, State Police will verify local law enforcement information about abductions to determine whether they meet state criteria before activating the EAS System for an Amber Alert.

After the initial alert, broadcasts of information will continue three to four

times an hour during the first few hours after the child has been abducted — the time period when the possibility of rescuing the child is considered the highest.

Amber Alert uses the ready-made statewide broadcast network capability available through the NOAA weather radio alert system.

Authorities will use a special child abduction emergency (CAE) code for these 90-second messages to distinguish them from weather alerts.

The cost to upgrade existing EAS equipment for Amber Alerts is minimal for cable, radio and television stations with Y2K compliant software. Some manufacturers are offering the software for free.

The State Emergency Communications Committee hopes to incorporate final recommendations into the state's Emergency Alert System plan by the end of November so localities will have a set of standards to follow.

Once they get a green light on the statewide Amber Alert, Virginia law enforcement authorities will be able to more effectively use this vital resource to protect the state's most defenseless citizens.

Visit [www.jmu.edu/wmra/eas/index.html](http://www.jmu.edu/wmra/eas/index.html) to learn more about the Amber Plan.

# Franklin bridges funding gap for mitigation project

By Bob Lambert, Staff Writer

Three years ago, Russell Pace stood on the corner of Main Street and Second Avenue and watched Hurricane Floyd floodwaters engulf downtown Franklin.

"It was so quiet," the public works operations superintendent recalls. "All you could hear was the water splashing on the curb. It was one of those things you never forget."

When residents returned to view the damage, Pace says the loss was evident on their faces. "It's hard to describe that devastating feeling," he says.

Soon, volunteers from across the state and around the nation rallied to help the crippled community get back on its feet.

"We never received a bill," says Franklin Public Works Director Jamie Weist. "There was no way we could have recovered without their help."

In 2002, Franklin got an unexpected opportunity to repay their debt of gratitude when they helped a small coalmining town some 400 miles away reduce their vulnerability to future flooding.

Weist had contacted VDEM this summer following the devastating floods in Southwest Virginia to offer their services to an affected community.

VDEM Preparation and Recovery Specialist Julian Gilman told him that the tiny town of Pocahontas, badly flooded a year earlier, needed help to dredge an old coal company canal that had silted up over a long period of time.

Gilman said FEMA Region III decided that the project didn't qualify for federal mitigation funding and Pocahontas lacked the resources to do the work on its own.

Pace led a five-member public works crew that Franklin sent at its own expense to dig out the debris-clogged channel of Laurel Creek with borrowed or rented equipment. (A local group, Tazewell County Disaster Relief, raised \$6,500 to rent a long stick excavator.)

The team split up into two groups, starting at each end of the one-mile long canal. In two weeks last August, the team removed 6,500 cubic yards of sediment from the aging waterway.

As they worked, residents came by to thank them for the work they were doing.

"This was a major deal for these folks," Pace says.

"Everybody thanked us 100 times over. They're a wonderful group of people."

When the Franklin crew was finished, Pocahontas Mayor Pat Hurley and his town organized an "Evening of Thanksgiving" at the Pocahontas Opera House Oct. 17 to "extend our humble appreciation to the city of Franklin."

Four of the six members of the Franklin crew attended the ceremony in which Hurley presented the city of Franklin with a framed resolution of appreciation and Franklin Mayor James Council presented the town of Pocahontas the "key" to the city of Franklin.

"I said this was not a straight ditch in a flat area like where they lived and they still resolved to help," Hurley says.

"This is profound testimony to the fact that brotherly love still exists in this great country of ours."

Since the team finished the project, Pocahontas has had several heavy rainstorms.

"Normally they would have had some flooding," Pace says.



**This one's on us.** Franklin public works crew member Jimmy Rogers is seen at work in the canal. Rogers joined Carlton Evans, Kenneth Babb, Courtney Blunt and James Keith Hill in digging out the debris-clogged channel of Laurel Creek. (Photo by Russell Pace, city of Franklin.)

"This time, the water was nowhere near the top of the canal.

"We've done something here that we'll tell our grand-

children about. It was a life-altering experience and we felt privileged to have been a part of it."

## Terrorism trainer moves to Prince William



When Pat Collins joined VDEM in late 1999, terrorism was just a dark cloud on the horizon for many citizens.

A year after the Sept. 11 attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center, he has moved to the front lines of emergency management as the new coordinator for Prince William County.

During his tenure with the agency, Collins shepherded the state's terrorism preparedness training program from infancy to a nationally recognized development and delivery curriculum. In all, more than 8,000 Virginia first responders benefited from his expertise in terrorism consequence management.

Though he says he could have never imagined the twists and turns the world has taken in just three short years, Collins has been quick to adapt to the ever-changing threat. One month after the Sept. 11 attacks, postal envelopes were first used to successfully deliver lethal anthrax. Collins soon revamped the VDEM training program and materials to reflect the newly recognized dangers of an anthrax bioterrorism attack.

"We have to make sure we are as technically correct as we can," says Brett Burdick, VDEM technological hazards division director. "It's hard to do, and Pat made it happen. He has left a legacy here at VDEM that will be hard to match."



# Responders on the clock for terrorism response

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Approximately 700 people attended last month's Virginia Hazardous Materials Conference. The following article offers a synopsis of information shared in just two of 72 workshops, which emphasized a proactive approach to "Securing Our Future."

In the realm of homeland security, life seems to be imitating art as terrorism response takes a cue from two popular television series.



In this concept series, each episode covers just one hour of a 24-hour period in the life of CIA operative Jack Bauer. For Bauer, every minute counts and every decision is critical.

Likewise, decisions made within the first hour of a special operations incident response are critical to containing the threat and minimizing loss of life.

According to emergency response specialist Greg Noll (Hildebrand & Noll Associates), special operations events can be ranked from low to high threat in this order:

- Nuclear
- Chemical
- Radiological
- Biochemical
- Industrial Chemical
- Bio-toxin

In each case, separating the players from the spectators is critical to operational efficiency.

"Isolate the area and deny entry," Noll says. "You can't safely and effectively manage the incident if you don't have control of the scene. Site management and control is a critical benchmark in the overall success of the incident."

Immediately after 9/11, the process for establishing critical isolation perimeters around the Pentagon and the World Trade Center differed dramatically. With its self-contained nature and an ongoing renovation project, the Pentagon site was relatively easy to secure.

Conversely, Noll says it took responders several days to place a cyclone fence around the World Trade Center in New York City's bustling financial district.



**Sorting the spores.** FBI and Environmental Protection Agency personnel pore through anthrax-contaminated mail at a containment facility. (FBI Courtesy Photo.)

The influx of volunteers, most with well-meaning intentions, was a major issue for local responders.

The next priorities in the first hour are:

- Determining the materials and agents involved.
- Ensuring the safety of all personnel from all hazards.
- Ensuring that responders have the correct personal protective equipment.
- Identifying rescue, decontamination, medical triage and public protective actions.
- Maintaining the integrity of potential evidence for criminal prosecution.

Emergency responders must also recognize potential evidence for a criminal investigation and avoid contaminating the scene. Documenting details as soon as possible may prove invaluable in prosecuting the perpetrators, Noll says.



Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, forensic investigators have been developing new ways of gathering and analyzing evidence in the wake of mass casualty incidents.

Techniques are similar to those dramatized in the popular TV series *CSI* (Crime Scene Investigation).

Basically, investigators look for a detailed analysis of the weapon used in the crime to identify suspects. With the anthrax scare a year ago, the weapon was millions of microscopic spores.

"The anthrax incident was a daunting crime scene investigation," says Dr. Douglas Beecher, Ph.D., a forensic microbiologist in the FBI Hazardous Materials Response Unit.

While identifying the species of the spore was relatively easy, investigators wanted to know what lab it came from so they could zero in on the perpetrator.

They also needed to figure out how it was manufactured, distributed and dispersed so they would know who was exposed to the potentially deadly organism.

"At Boca Raton in October 2001, we ran 170 samples through the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) in 10 days," said Dr. Beecher. "We had to streamline sampling and analysis and eliminate bottlenecks."

"By November, we were able to process 632 samples in three days. In our August 2002 Boca Raton operation, nearly 5,000 samples were processed in 10 days through a Miami public health laboratory."

Beecher says investigators had to develop new techniques on the fly and are still perfecting the approach weapons of mass destruction demand.

"The technology is developing," he said. "It's going to take some time and require alterations in the infrastructure to become truly efficient."

With fact becoming ever stranger than fiction, emergency managers are now rewriting the script for terrorism responses as they move beyond weapons of mass destruction to special operations incidents.



## **Terrorist Weapons.**

For assistance in assessing the nature of the weapons used, Noll recommends contacting the

National Response Center as the single federal point of contact for technical information at 1-800-424-8802.

## **Anthrax Guidelines.**

Anthrax-related reference materials, including the July 2002 General Services Administration policy advisory on managing possible anthrax contamination in federal mail centers, can be accessed through the VDEM Web site at [www.vaemergency.com/prepare/terrorismtoolkit/terrorismtoolbox.cfm](http://www.vaemergency.com/prepare/terrorismtoolkit/terrorismtoolbox.cfm).

# Training Calendar

## Emergency Management

### Exercise Design & Evaluation

Nov. 5-7/Richmond

### Mass Fatalities Incident Mgmt.

Nov. 12-14/Newport News

### Coordinator's Briefing

Nov. 14/Williamsburg

### Disaster Response and

### Recovery Operations

Nov. 18-19/Richmond

### Emergency Preparedness

### Community Outreach Conference

Nov. 20/Richmond

### Adjunct Instructor Workshop

(Invitation Only)

Nov. 21-22/Williamsburg

### Flood Fight Operations

Dec. 10-11/Charlottesville

### Local Situation Assessment/

### Asking for Help

Dec. 12/Charlottesville

## Radiological

### Traffic/Access Control

Dec. 9/Henrico County

## Reservist Training

### Reservist Program Seminar

Nov. 20/Richmond

### Action Tracking System (I & P)/

### Tabletop Exercise

Dec. 3/Richmond

## Search and Rescue

### Managing Land Search

### Operations (Part II)

Nov. 8-10/Charlottesville

### GSAR Institute (Part II)

Dec. 6-8/Front Royal

## Technological Hazards

### Public Safety Response to

### Terrorism (Tactical)

Nov. 2-3/South Hill

Nov. 21- 22/Charlottesville

### Chemistry of

### Hazardous Materials

Dec. 2-13/Winchester

Dec. 2-13/Newport News

Visit [www.vaemergency.com/train](http://www.vaemergency.com/train) for more training opportunities.



## Winterize your community with our 02 campaign

(Now available online at [www.vaemergency.com/02winter](http://www.vaemergency.com/02winter))

In recent years, Virginians have dealt with snowdrifts, closed highways, freezing temperatures and prolonged power outages. This winter could offer more of the same.

For those who take the time to prepare, the winter season can be just a minor inconvenience. You can help citizens "Take Winter by Storm" by participating in the 2002-2003 winter preparedness campaign.

To kick off this initiative, Governor Warner has proclaimed Nov. 10-16 as Winter Preparedness Week in Virginia. Our focus this season is winter travel emergencies.

In partnership with the National Weather Service, VDEM has again provided educational materials for you to customize for local use. Contact Dawn Eischen at [deischen@vdem.state.va.us](mailto:deischen@vdem.state.va.us) or (804) 897-6510 for details.

## Drought Brief (continued from page 1)

While current conditions indicate that most surface water systems will recharge, water conservation measures may still be required for some time. Ground water conditions continue to remain low west of Interstate 95. Several water systems have lost wells and had new wells drilled or are having water hauled to their customers.

On Oct. 22, Gov. Mark Warner announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) granted disaster designations for an additional 39 Virginia localities impacted by drought and excessive heat. Previously, 10 Virginia localities were declared primary disaster areas.

(Compiled from Oct. 21, 2002, Drought Monitoring Task Force Report. Read the full report at [www.vaemergency.com/newsroom](http://www.vaemergency.com/newsroom).)

## Whistle Stop Tour



VDEM Area 1 HMO Glen Rudner was site coordinator for the first stop on a four-state Norfolk Southern whistle stop hazmat awareness tour in October. The program was designed to increase community awareness about responding to rail, barge, truck and chemical incidents. Visit the Transcaer Web site at [www.TRANSCAER.com](http://www.TRANSCAER.com) or contact Glen Rudner at [des395@aol.com](mailto:des395@aol.com) to learn more.



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State Coordinator ..... Michael M. Cline  
Executive Editor ..... Janet L. Clements  
Managing Editor ..... Barbara B. Bowen  
Staff Writer ..... Robert P. Lambert

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